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In conjunction with



Present

The Biddle-Lipscomb  
**Ready to Work**  
Initiative

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**October 13, 2011**





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## WRTP/BIG STEP's History, Purpose & Goals

As a partnership between two 501(c)(3) corporations, WRTP/BIG STEP has operated as an effective industry-led workforce intermediary since inception. In 2002, WRTP and BIG STEP, both with their own highly successful histories, partnered to facilitate more effective coordination of employer-driven worker readiness to best ensure that individuals preparing for employment gained the skills and experiences that employers needed. In 2005, the partnership established the **Center of Excellence (COE) for Skilled Trades & Industry**. WRTP/BIG STEP has the following major units: field work and employer/industry services, training, partner coordination, and consulting services. Each organization's Board of Directors sets policy, approves the annual budget, and has fiscal and programmatic oversight responsibility while delegating day-to-day decisions to the President/CEO. Throughout their partnership, WRTP has served as the fiscal agent when applying for funding.

WRTP/BIG STEP coordinates with area technical colleges and schools, workforce investment boards, community- and faith-based organizations, and employers and unions in order to accomplish the following:

- **The use of an employer-driven model.** WRTP/BIG STEP partners with employers to design training programs that meet their current and near-future needs. This approach ensures that workers trained for employment have the skills that employers require and are seeking in their hires. This focus profoundly reorients the system, and as such, it is at the center of the workforce intermediary model.
- **Continual assessment of sector needs.** Confidential employer needs assessments that are conducted at two-year intervals provide real-time information on the status of diversity, expected employment increases or decreases, challenges, and the assistance needed to expand among the representative companies within the manufacturing and construction sectors.
- **A participant-centered philosophy.** While the COE programs are employer-driven, they are also participant-centered. Each candidate is assessed to determine whether he or she is qualified for immediate job openings and/or education and training programs. If the candidate already meets the minimum requirements for immediate openings, he or she is referred to employers that are searching for qualified applicants. Those who need to acquire additional skills are advised of pre-employment training opportunities, apprenticeship preparation tutoring, or remedial programs offered by our partners. The programs offer flexible scheduling, including evening and weekend access to training classes and tutoring, to enable those working concurrently in low-wage jobs to participate.
- **Development and implementation of short-term training programs.** Based on employer demand, the COE has developed numerous short-term, state-approved training programs. The certificates that are awarded to students who graduate from these programs are widely recognized credentials within the industries that helped design them.
- **Placement, follow up, retention, and advancement.** The end goal of COE programs is both about placing people in quality jobs and about ensuring that those placed in employment sustain this attachment to the labor force and advance in their chosen fields. The COE maintains relationships with graduates and facilitates mentoring programs to promote retention and advancement of new and existing employees.

In the April 22, 2007 article from the Journal Sentinel Editorial Board, WRTP/BIG STEP's Center of Excellence was cited as a model for success. WRTP/BIG STEP has demonstrated past success on a number of job training and placement initiatives. Here are other successful projects:

#### Marquette Interchange Project

WRTP/BIG STEP is proud to have helped supply the steady stream of construction workers who toiled to make the massive Marquette Interchange project a success. WRTP/BIG STEP took over the state Department of Transportation's contract for the TrANS training program in 2004, just as the project was getting underway in Milwaukee County. **Out of the 226 graduates of the TrANS program, the majority of which were minorities, WRTP/BIG STEP facilitated 223 placements—including 91 first-time apprenticeships—with an average wage of \$17.01 per hour.**

#### WE Energies Elm Road Generating Station

WRTP/BIG STEP acted as the central clearinghouse for the assessment, preparation, and placement of job-ready candidates for careers in construction and manufacturing for the WE Energies Elm Road Generating Station project. As the Elm Road project demonstrates, the Center provides an effective pipeline of diverse candidates for skilled trades and industries in the region. **At the time of the project, WRTP/BIG STEP attained 473 placements – including 150 apprenticeships – at an average starting wage of \$14.82 per hour. People of color accounted for 73% of the placements, and women accounted for 13%.**

#### City of Milwaukee Urban Forestry Program

WRTP/BIG STEP acted as the clearinghouse for the Strengthening Diversity through Urban Forestry Service Delivery program by providing assessment, preparation and placement of job-ready candidates. The program consisted of a 6-month paid training directly with City of Milwaukee employees. **WRTP/BIG STEP facilitated 14 job placements at an average wage of \$14.00 per hour.**

# Ready to Work

## The Problem:

Thousands of Milwaukee County residents are unemployed and struggling to support themselves and their families. Continuing through 2011, local jobs remain scarce compared to the unemployed who need them, especially as the competition for available jobs escalates.

To add to that, local employers report difficulty filling jobs with qualified workers. In brief, not only do jobs need to be created, but efforts must be made to ensure that workers have the appropriate education and skill set to compete for these jobs. So, the question is...what's missing?

## The Solution:

We offer a workforce initiative, **Ready to Work**, which will create job access for Milwaukee County residents who have demonstrated prior success (such as attaining a HS diploma/GED and maintaining a valid Drivers License) yet cannot seem to reach the high-wage, family-supporting jobs that are currently available.

To provide this access, we want to create opportunity for work-ready individuals to gain access to county and private sector positions leading to clear advancement opportunities.

Through **Ready to Work**, the partners involved will provide the educational training and on-the-job work experience needed to allow our county residents to advance to the next level on the path to higher-level positions.

Through **Ready to Work**, the program will identify current opportunities, create new entry-level jobs and provide work experience opportunities. **Ready to Work** will provide Milwaukee County residents the start of a sustainable career pathway.

## Ready to Work Investment:

We need the initial investment to get Milwaukee County residents started on a career path toward a high-wage position. This is not something new. Through **Ready to Work**, we are making an investment in a proven system that is already established to push qualified candidates through to a meaningful career pathway. With limited resources it's more important than ever to provide the support system for individuals to access and succeed in these jobs.

## Work Experience will include:

20 Hours per week (proposed pay range: \$10.00 per hour)  
10 Hours per week (job shadowing on construction site)  
10 Hours per week (multi-craft construction training at WRTP/BIG STEP)

## Outcomes:

With a \$1 million investment, we expect to reach **1000** Milwaukee County residents. Through the extensive screening and assessment process, **750** residents will receive job training, and **500** Milwaukee County residents will reach placement in jobs paying at least **\$15.00** per hour.

With a \$2 million investment, we expect to reach **1500** Milwaukee County residents. Through the extensive screening and assessment process, **1075** residents will receive job training and **1000** Milwaukee County residents will reach placement in jobs paying at least **\$15.00** per hour.

## The steps for implementing **Ready to Work** are as follows:

- ✓ **Referral & Supportive Service Organizations:** WRTP/BIG STEP will utilize well established and successful partners to recruit and prepare individuals, get people work-ready and eliminate barriers to employment. Some of these partners will include:
  - High School and Technical Colleges (MATC, WCTC, Bay View High School)
  - Workforce Development Agencies (Milwaukee Urban League)
  - Community- and Faith-based organizations (Milwaukee Christian Center, Community Service Corps)
  - Joint Apprenticeship Committees
- ✓ **Essential Training Providers:** WRTP/BIG STEP will collaborate with essential training providers to provide educational and on-the-job work experience. Some of these partners will include:
  - Milwaukee Area Technical College
  - Milwaukee Public Schools
  - Milwaukee Area Building and Construction Trades
- ✓ **Leverage Funding Sources:** WRTP/BIG STEP will leverage and engage additional public, private and philanthropic resources to ensure the **Ready to Work** model is sustainable. Some of these partners will include:
  - Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB)
  - Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance (a consortium of private foundations collaborating to fund workforce initiatives)
  - Private Sector
- ✓ **Work Experience:** WRTP/BIG STEP will provide county residents work experience through internships to gain overall knowledge of the skilled trades and future job opportunities. Residents will be led by skilled trades workers and will receive the following:
  - Career counseling
  - Technical information regarding the trades
  - On-the-job observation and experience
  - Training prior to Apprenticeship
- ✓ **Skilled Trade Training:** The next step will be to provide skilled trades training which will be a combination of on-the-job and classroom training.
  - 10 year investment per worker
  - \$40,000 investment per worker from the private sector
- ✓ **Qualified Workers:** WRTP/BIG STEP and its partners will develop the qualified workers needed in the future for key positions in the construction, manufacturing and utility industries. These apprenticeship positions may lead to the following high-wage, positions:
  - Journey Level HVAC Workers
  - Journey Level Electricians
  - Journey Level Plumbers
  - Journey Level Industrial Maintenance Workers

# Ready to Work

